

## BOOK REVIEW

JOE MCFARLAND AND GREGORY M. MUELLER. 2009. **Edible Wild Mushrooms of Illinois & Surrounding States: A Field-to-Kitchen Guide.** (ISBN 978-0-252-07643-5, pbk.). University of Illinois Press, 1325 South Oak Street, MC-566, Champaign, Illinois 61820-6903, U.S.A. (**Orders:** orders@press.uchicago.edu, University of Illinois Press, c/o Chicago Distribution Center, 11030 South Langley Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60628, U.S.A., 1-800-621-2736, 773-702-7000 international, 1-800-621-8476 fax domestic, 773-702-7212 fax international). \$24.98, 232 pp., 292 color photographs, 7" x 10".

A fantastic book on mushrooms! As a reviewer of more than 50 books I give five stars and place it at the top of my list of "must buy" books on mushrooms at a bargain-basement price. The authors merit accolades for the special content found in this book that deserves to be on the bookshelf of every mushroom enthusiast both beginner and professional alike. The design, layout, and quality color images are the "best of the best." Joe McFarland took the spectacular photographs that show exceptional depth of field and external morphological detail.

The front cover is glossy paper equivalent to 10 point, and the color images are printed on glossy, opaque paper that highlights the high resolution color images in large-sized format, sometimes two filling a page along with captions. The spine is perfect bound using glue, not stitched and sewn. This is durable enough for general use but should not be thrown in the trunk of the car or in a backpack. Nevertheless, many beginners will want to use it in the field to picture-key some of the more common edibles and poisonous mushrooms even though there are no keys to identify species.

The writing style is engaging, easy to read, humorous at times, and seems to contain a surprise each time you turn the page. If you had any doubts about collecting mushrooms, when you get through reading this book you will love to hunt, explore nature, and appreciate the incredible beauty and diversity of highly prized edible fungi that can be prepared as tasty dishes that will tantalize your palate.

There are many topical and sub-headings that require selectivity in summarizing the content. Some of the examples include discussions of "Why Forests Disappear" or a series of questions: "How can you tell if a mushroom is poisonous or edible?", "What is a mushroom?", "Why do mushrooms exist?", "Is this book really for you?", "Is it harmful to pull them out of the ground?", and "Are mushrooms good for you?" In most cases the narrative is approximately half or a full page and readily available as a brief read. Some of this information represents "golden nuggets" not found in other books.

The section about a few toxic mushrooms will be of special interest to people from Texas. Probably the most common toxic mushroom species in grassy residential lawns in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is *Lepiota molybdites*, with gills that have distinctive green spores. The large size and fairy rings that form throughout the summer, even during dry spells when triggered by ground irrigation systems, makes this a tempting morsel for small children. Another species with a Texas history is *Amanita thiersii* which was collected by Dr. Harry D. Thiers at College Station, Texas, in grassy areas. Many Amanitas are deadly poisonous and mostly occur in wooded areas. This species, however, once thought to be a restricted southern species, has apparently migrated northward where I have seen it by the hundreds on the University of Central Missouri campus and surrounding neighborhoods in grassy areas. Another toxic species, *Omphalotus illudens*, is frequently found around trees during October and November in River Legacy Parks, located in Arlington, Texas. It is one of the few examples of a mushroom that exhibits bioluminescence and glows in the dark. The gills on the underside of the cap emit an eerie bluish green color if fresh specimens are observed in a dark room (e.g. a closet) after your eyes have adapted.

"Mushrooms found with trees" is the section that includes edible mushrooms and descriptions of external morphology, habitat, and comments directly followed by look-alike species that are generally inedible or toxic. In some cases a section "In the Kitchen" gives instructions for preparation of the mushroom for various culinary uses. The list of highly prized edibles includes: *Grifolia frondosa*, *Lacti-porus sulphureus*, *Pleurotus ostreatus*, *Flammulina velutipes*, *Lepista nuda*, *Hericium americanum*, *Sparassis herbstii*, *Auricularia auricular-judae*, *Armillaria mellea*, *Hypomyces lactifluorum*, *Laccaria ochropurpurea*, *Lactarius indigo*, *Morchella esculenta* (and other species of morels with stories about springtime forays (early March in Texas)), *Cantharellus cibarius* and other species of chanterelles, *Gyrosporus castaneus* and other species of boletes, *Calvatia gigantea* and *Lycoperdon perlatum* and other species of puffballs, *Agaricus campestris*, *Coprinus comatus*, and a few additional species. The only drawback to the illustrations are the color images shown as *Agaricus* sp., *Boletus* sp., *Cortinarius* sp., *Stropharia* sp., and *Xerula* sp. that should have been identified to species.

One section of the book titled "Let's Eat" has 28 recipes and advice for cooking wild mushrooms. The topical heading "Semi-dry preservation—a revolutionary process to keep mushrooms truly fresh" has "how to" information that describes here for the first time partially dehydrated frozen mushrooms—stored in a vacuum—that preserves the succulent properties of the fresh mushroom found only at seasonal times of the year. More complex recipes are given with the names of executive chefs and restaurants that serve the dish like Chicken and Lobster Sunrise or Wild Turkey and Morels, and for each recipe the ingredients and preparation are given with special sauces in some cases. There are also simple recipes that are just as scrumptious such as Black Trumpet Salad. Each recipe has a color image of the final presentation on a plate or in a bowl. Choices like Double Oyster Chowder, Chanterelle Cream Soup, Black and Bleu Morels, Beer Batter Morels with Wild Garlic Mustard Dipping Sauce, Morel Tiramisu, or Mushroom Bolognese plus other tempting mushroom dishes will have your mouth watering. This book is worth the purchase price for just the recipes alone. So everybody enjoy hunting and eating mushrooms safely and use this book as your source of information.—Harold W. Keller, Research Associate, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 500 E 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76102-4025, U.S.A.